

**Washington, DC** - This afternoon the House overwhelmingly voted to override the President's veto of H.R. 6331, the Medicare Improvements for Patients and Providers Act of 2008. The legislation eliminates a pending 10 percent physician's payment reduction that was implemented on July 1st while also enhancing and extending certain programs for low-income Medicare beneficiaries.

The legislation originally passed the House on June 24th before being approved in the Senate on July 9th, 2008, and in both instances the measure passed with veto-proof majorities. The bill will now return to the Senate where a veto-override vote is expected to be successful.

In addition to eliminating the payment reduction, the bill also:

- **Extends and improves low-income assistance programs for Medicare beneficiaries whose income is below \$14,040.** This includes the "Qualified Individual" program which pays part B premiums for low-income beneficiaries with incomes of \$12,480 to \$14,040 a year. H.R. 6331 increases the amount of assets that low-income beneficiaries can have while still qualifying for assistance with Medicare costs.

- **Mandates that Medicare Advantage plans pay pharmacies promptly within 14 days.** The bill would also delay the implementation of an irresponsible payment rule which would lower reimbursements to pharmacies who serve Medicaid beneficiaries to cover only a fraction of their costs. The legislation's costs are offset by a reduction in premiums paid to private insurance companies whose government reimbursements currently exceed 100% of their costs.

Congressman Charlie Gonzalez (TX-20) issued the following statement applauding the successful vote to override the President's veto of the legislation:

"This legislation responsibly prevents a cut in payments to those physicians who treat Medicare patients and as a result, ensures uninterrupted access to healthcare for seniors and disabled Americans. At a time when our economic struggles suggest that we should be protecting these services, the President's veto carelessly placed them in jeopardy."

"This bill's overwhelming amount of bipartisan support in Congress, coupled with its strong grassroots support in the medical community and among everyday Americans, speaks volumes about the importance of this legislation. Such a significant cut in physician reimbursements would've had disastrous public health ramifications, and I am grateful that we were able to prevent this scenario by overriding an irresponsible veto."

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